



Testimony in Support of HB 2941  
March 20, 2019, HR D, 3:00 pm  
House Committee on Education

Chair Representative Doherty, Co-Vice Chairs Representative Alonso Leon and Representative Helt, and  
Committee Members

The Oregon School-Based Health Alliance (OSBHA) is a statewide nonprofit organization with a mission to strengthen school-based health services and systems that promote the health and academic success of young people. OSBHA has had the pleasure of working with the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office over the past several months to develop policy recommendations supporting health and well-being for Oregonians throughout the state.

OSBHA strongly supports HB 2941, directing the Higher Education Commission to require each mental health provider preparation program in the state to prepare a plan to recruit and graduate diverse mental health providers.

We interact with youth across the state who have told us that their greatest health need is increased access to mental health services. And they have also said it is critical that these services are culturally relevant and provided by a person they can relate to. This view is shown in research: Culture impacts the therapeutic relationship (Gopalkrishnan, 2018) in many ways, including provider-patient communication, which affects whether people engage and stay in treatment (Stewart, Simmons and Habibpour, 2012).

Youth are more likely to seek and stay in treatment with someone from their culture who looks like them and speaks like them. For those who have experienced trauma, the most powerful factor that leads to resilience is having a relationship with a trusted adult. Youth who have access to diverse mental health providers are better able to build that trust.

As the population of Oregon's young people becomes more diverse, the pool of mental health professionals continues to be largely homogeneous. This mismatch needs to be remedied in order for youth to access appropriate care. HB 2941 is part of the solution. OSBHA urges an Aye vote on HB 2941 to expand access to critical appropriate mental health care for our youth and their communities.

Sincerely,

Laurie Hoyt Huffman, MS, LPC  
Executive Director